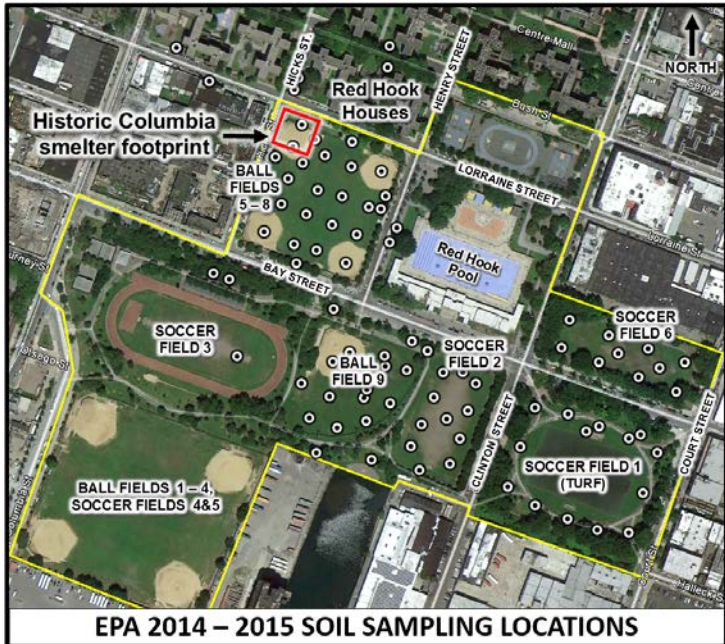




# EPA Investigation of Historic Columbia Lead Facility: Cleanup of Fields Planned

Community Update No. 4

July 2015



EPA 2014 – 2015 SOIL SAMPLING LOCATIONS

## PUBLIC MEETING:

Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM  
Miccio Center Gymnasium  
110 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231

## WHAT IS SECONDARY LEAD SMELTING?

Secondary lead smelting plants refine scrap or used lead materials into metallic lead of a higher purity. Such materials can include the lead plates from batteries, lead pipe or metal sheets that contain lead.

Secondary smelting can be responsible for releasing lead into the surrounding environment through lead fume emissions. Lead dust and smoke can be released during the smelting process, and slag contaminated with lead may be left over after the smelting process.

## WHY IS LEAD A PROBLEM?

Lead is a toxic metal that was used for many years in paint and leaded gasoline. Lead poisoning can cause a number of harmful health effects, particularly in children under the age of six.

Exposure to lead in soil can occur when children play in the dirt and put their hands or dusty toys in their mouths. Lead can also get into your body by breathing or swallowing lead dust, or by eating soil containing lead.

## WHAT DID THE APRIL 2015 SAMPLING FIND?

In April 2015, as part of a continued investigation of the historic secondary lead smelter known as Columbia Smelting and Refining Works (Columbia), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) collected soil samples from Ball Field 9, Soccer Fields 1, 2 and 6 and surrounding areas within Red Hook Park. The purpose was to determine if any of these fields have been contaminated with lead from the historic Columbia facility, which operated in the 1920s and 1930s.

The results showed that lead levels at these four fields are much lower than those at Ball Fields 5, 6, 7 and 8, which were closed due to lead contamination from the Columbia facility. Lead levels at Ball Field 9 and Soccer Fields 1, 2 and 6 are not an immediate health concern and closure of these fields is not required at this time; however, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) will be closing some areas surrounding Soccer Field 1 as a precaution. Because some of the lead levels several inches below the surface of these four fields are above health-based standards, a cleanup is necessary in the long term. In addition, NYC Parks and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will be sampling soil in the remaining areas of the park (Soccer Field 3, and Ball Fields 1, 2, 3 and 4 and the surrounding areas) in Fall 2015.

## WHO WILL CONDUCT THE CLEANUP AND WHEN?

NYC Parks will be remediating Ball Fields 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, where the lead is from the Columbia facility, under EPA oversight. Because this is a large construction project, planning for and engineering the cleanup will take more than a year. To reduce disturbing athletic schedules, Ball Fields 5 through 8 will be remediated first, and once they are open again, Ball Field 9 will be cleaned up. The entire project may take several years to complete.

NYC Parks will also be remediating Soccer Fields 1, 2 and 6 over the next several years, where lead contamination is believed to be from historic fill material, not from the historic Columbia facility. The

**If you would like information about the site please contact:**

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Community Involvement  
Coordinator  
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Toll Free: (800) 346-5009  
[loney.natalie@epa.gov](mailto:loney.natalie@epa.gov)

**If you would like information on other environmental concerns or the Superfund hazardous waste program contact:**

George Zachos  
U.S. EPA  
Regional Public Liaison  
(732) 321-6621  
Toll Free: (888) 283-7626  
[zachos.george@epa.gov](mailto:zachos.george@epa.gov)

**Visit the EPA's website at:**

[www.epa.gov/region2/superfund/removal/columbia](http://www.epa.gov/region2/superfund/removal/columbia)

fill was added in the 1800s to expand the ground surface towards the Gowanus Bay, since this area of Red Hook was originally a tidal marsh.

**CLEANUP PLANS**

NYC Parks will clean up Ball Fields 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 under EPA oversight by first removing all park features such as fencing, curbing and other structures, adding a layer of plastic sheeting then covering it with one foot of clean soil over the entire area. The baseball diamonds, grass cover, fencing, walkways, and associated structures will then be reinstalled. Controls will be put in place to make sure the public is not exposed to any contaminants during construction. This cleanup method will permanently eliminate public contact with contaminants by isolating them under the plastic sheeting and one foot of clean soil. This will also serve to prevent any future spread of contaminated soils from these ball fields. The layer of clean soil will then be monitored and inspected over the years.

NYC Parks is in the process of planning the renovation of Soccer Fields 1, 2 and 6, including securing funding, setting a time frame and choosing a method, which may include installation of artificial turf. Any actions for the remaining areas of the park, including Soccer Field 3 and Ball Fields 1 through 4, will be determined once sampling results come back.

**HOW WILL I GET UPDATES AND THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION?**

EPA and NYC Parks will provide updates on the status of the additional sampling and cleanup efforts to the community in various ways, including fact sheets, letters to park users, updates to the website, and public information sessions where EPA and NYC Parks will be available to present plans and answer questions. The next public meeting will be held on July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

EPA also plans to establish an Information Repository at the Red Hook Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library where the public can review and copy records related to EPA's investigation and the cleanup of Ball Fields 5 through 9.

**SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR LEAD EXPOSURE**

The following steps are recommended to reduce your potential exposure to lead contamination that may be present in urban soils.

- Remove shoes at the door before entering your home to prevent tracking in any dirt that may be on your shoes. Clean the bottom of your shoes with a wet wipe or paper towel.
- Wash your hands and face after visiting these ball fields and always before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Avoid digging into or disturbing soil below the surface of the ball fields.